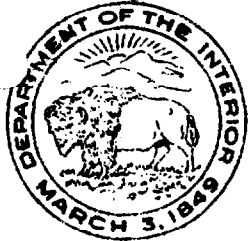


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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FWS PLANS EXTENSIVE NESTLING DOVE BANDING PROGRAM

The mourning dove--game bird in some States and song bird in others--is scheduled for what might be the most intensive hunt in its career, but this hunt will be without guns, and with leg bands being used instead of shot.

The Fish and Wildlife Service, which has jurisdiction over the dove because it is a migratory bird, needs more information about the dove's migration pattern--and banding is the most reliable way developed to date to get those data, according to John L. Farley, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Banding operations on doves have been conducted since 1920 and 145,000 birds have been so marked. Of this total 100,000 were banded in the past seven years and at least half of that number were banded in the southeastern part of the United States where dove hunting is a sport of top magnitude.

But a large portion of the banded birds recovered to date have not been associated with any nesting area.

Experts of the Fish and Wildlife Service maintain that the best way to get a true migration pattern is to band doves--lots of them and in every part of the country--while they are nestlings.

That is why the Fish and Wildlife Service, with the help of many State fish and game departments, is preparing for an all-out banding program covering as much of the country as possible. Banding operations will get under way in some areas this spring. Most of the banding will be done by volunteer bird banders, men and women who meet the exacting Fish and Wildlife Service requirements for a bird bander's permit.

Initial arrangements for this comprehensive nestling banding program began several months ago. Up to date the best reaction has come from the northern prairie States and the upper Mississippi River States where dove hunting is generally taboo, and from the southeastern part of the country where hunting the mourning dove is a top sport. Favorable reaction from the West and Southwest is expected and the banders in the northeastern States are beginning to get interested in the project.

Of the 145,000 doves banded in the past 36 seasons there have been 5,033 recoveries, most of them by hunters. These recoveries have been made in 29 States. Some doves banded in Wisconsin have been found in Mexico; some banded in Alabama were killed in Texas; Michigan banded doves were taken in Florida and at least one Massachusetts dove ended its tour of duty way down in Texas.

But these fragmentary data fall far short of management needs. Not even the fact that out of 798 banded doves recovered in Texas, 726 had been banded in Texas, nor the fact that out of 790 banded doves found in Florida 698 had been banded there can be considered as evidence that these States shoot mostly birds raised within their borders. Answers to many questions will not be available until the banding area pattern is more representative of the doves' breeding grounds.

It is to correct these deficiencies and to determine a migration pattern which can be scientifically accepted that the Fish and Wildlife Service is urging this full-scale banding program for nestling doves. Once a valid migration pattern is provided, the task of management of the mourning dove will be a more clear cut job than it is at present.

Dove banding was given a big impetus ten years ago when the 10 Southeastern States set up a cooperative program. This soon spread to other parts of the country and now there are 44 States cooperating in the work.

The mourning dove is unusual among game birds in being multibrooded. Many local studies indicate an average of three successful broods per year. Nests have been found in every month of the year, but the major nesting season is from April to September.

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